

ABSTRACT

A method for consolidating canning, pulp, paste, or shelf stable processing and fresh cut produce processing which utilizes existing harvesting and processing facilities. The method comprises the steps of machine harvesting a plurality of fresh produce for example tomatoes, placing the plurality of fresh produce into a cut, pulp or paste processing stream associated with a shelf stable processing system, diverting superior quality produce into a fresh cut produce stream, cutting the diverted portion of the fresh produce and depositing the fresh cut produce into one or more packages. In one embodiment of the invention, the one or more packages comprise modified atmosphere packages. In another embodiment of the invention, at least the tops and bottoms are removed from the diverted fresh produce. The removed tops and bottoms and any juices generated by the cutting are then reintroduced into the shelf stable processing stream thus improving production yield and reducing unnecessary solid waste generation.